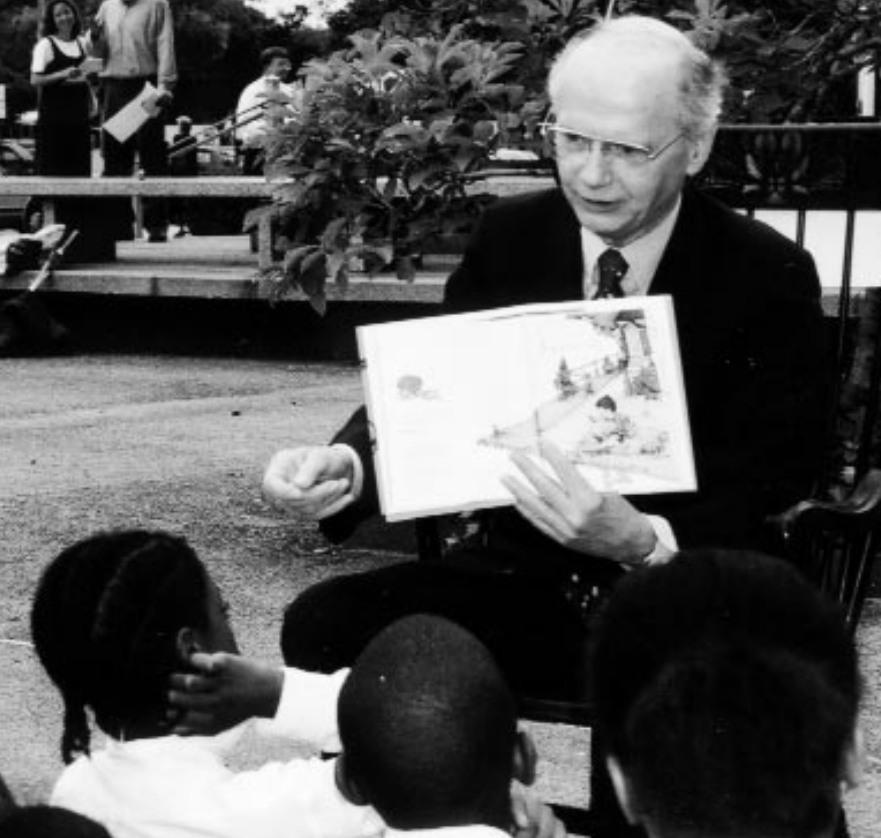


# COMMUNITY

Issue No. 79

U P D A T E

August 2000



*“Students who read over the summer are better prepared to learn when they return to school in the fall.”*

*U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley at the America Goes Back to School kickoff event*

FULL STORY ON PAGE 4

## Modernizing America's Schools—

*Three-Fourths of School Buildings Need Repair*

Communities across the country are struggling to address the critical need to renovate existing schools and build new ones. The continuing developments in technology and rising student enrollments present today's school buildings—the bulk of which were built 40 years ago—with challenges beyond their capabilities.

In a recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics, three-fourths of the schools surveyed reported needing to spend some money on repairs, renovations and modernizations. According to the report *Condition of America's Public School Facilities: 1999*,

an estimated \$127 billion are needed to bring the country's schools into good condition for the 21st century.

“This report need not be just a tale of unmanageable woe,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley. He pointed to a bipartisan effort that will provide \$24.8 billion to build and modernize up to 6,000 schools nationwide.

The joint proposed legislation, H.R. 4094, has bipartisan sponsorship from Representatives Nancy Johnson (R-CT) and Charlie Rangel (D-NY). It authorizes states and school districts to use a new type of bond—a tax-credit bond—for school construction, renovation and

modernization. The federal government would pay the interest to the bondholders in the form of a tax credit, which would relieve the community of the expense. This legislation now has more than 218 co-sponsors.

Currently, states and local communities can issue school construction bonds to exempt from federal taxation the interest earned by the bondholder. This enables communities to sell the bonds at a lower interest rate than that earned by standard corporate bonds. However, the community must repay the principal and the tax-exempt interest over the life of the bond.

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## COMMENTS

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## Federal Budget Affects Local Schools

By Richard W. Riley, *U.S. Secretary of Education*

Crystal Davidson and her students at Audubon Elementary School in Owensboro, Kentucky, read *Charlotte's Web* this year. They came to love the story that has inspired so many children. Sometimes the students struggled with difficult words. But through their efforts they became better readers—an accomplishment that will help them succeed next fall when they return to school.

Unfortunately, the coming year is less promising for Ms. Davidson and 29,000 other teachers already hired with funds from the U.S. Department of Education's class-size reduction initiative. That is because Congress may decide not to fund the program next year. Ms. Davidson's story is a reminder that "inside-the-beltway" decisions directly affect teachers and students across the country.

Last year, for example, the Department awarded four new 21st Century Community Learning Center grants in Brooklyn, New York. In these after-school programs, about 8,400 children in Brooklyn can receive services like mentoring in basic skills, drug and violence prevention counseling, and academic enrichment in reading and math. However, the Department had to turn down five fully qualified applications in Brooklyn because Congress failed to provide enough money to fund the programs.

This year, the funding level set by Congress for the 21st Century program is significantly lower than the amount the president requested, which means that the Department may not be able to support needed after-school programs in communities across the country. With the House Appropriation falling \$2.9 billion below the president's budget request for education, many programs will suffer. (See amounts for some of these programs in the chart below.)



	FY 2000 Appropriation	President's FY 2001 Request	House Committee Appropriation	Difference from the President's Request
<b>21st Century Community Learning Centers</b> funds after-school activities	\$453,377	\$1,000,000	\$600,000	-\$400,000
<b>Reducing Class Size</b> hires 100,000 new teachers	\$1,300,000	\$1,750,000	-0-	-\$1,750,000
<b>School Renovation Loan and Grant Program</b> provides financing for emergency renovations	New	\$1,300,000	-0-	-\$1,300,000
<b>Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology</b> trains new teachers in use of computers	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$85,000	-\$65,000
<b>GEAR UP for College</b> creates pathways to higher education	\$200,000	\$325,000	\$200,000	-\$125,000
<b>College Opportunity Tax Cut</b> helps make college more affordable		\$30 billion	-0-*	-\$30 billion

\*has not been adopted by the Senate or House

# Involving More Than Tea

By Melanie Fox, Principal of Coral Gables Elementary School, Florida

At Coral Gables Elementary, the tradition of strong parental and community involvement is thriving, although the community has changed dramatically over the past 77 years—from an affluent white population to a largely Hispanic one, with nearly half of the students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Early in the spring, as we begin registration for the next year, we begin activities for the parents that culminate in our annual America Goes Back to School evenings in the fall.



Upon my assignment as principal here, I participated in the long-held tradition of the Spring Tea. Hosted annually by

the PTA and the school staff to orient prospective parents for the fall term, the tea now brings together around 200 people. To my surprise and delight, the refreshments are served on cut-glass plates and saucers with an apple motif resembling fine crystal. In fact, we call these treasured pieces, purchased 15 years ago by the PTA, the “Coral Gables

Elementary Crystal.”

Considerable time is spent by PTA members each year in both making the plans and washing the “crystal” prior to and following the tea. Sometimes someone will suggest we just use paper plates to save all the work. But, invariably, the group decides that this tradition is worth saving and speaks volumes about our school and the kind of education our children receive here.

This tradition helps us communicate the high esteem in which parents are held and the high regard the school has for their involvement and participation. Parents, I have learned, must feel welcome in their child’s school in order to successfully participate and help their child succeed. The unspoken things that schools do to either encourage or discourage parents often make the difference as schools look for ways to encourage America to go back to school.

*Now entering her 18th year as a school principal, Melanie Fox was recently honored as Florida’s National Distinguished Principal. Since 1991, she has been principal of Coral Gables Elementary, a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. For more information, visit [www.dade.k12.fl.us/gablese](http://www.dade.k12.fl.us/gablese).*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

According to Secretary Riley, building new schools and renovating old ones were put on the “back burner” in the early 1990s because of the economic recession during that time. “Many school districts were then caught off guard by rising enrollment.... Next September, for the fifth year in a row, we will set a new national school enrollment record,” he added.

For more information, visit [www.ed.gov/inits/construction/](http://www.ed.gov/inits/construction/) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN. For a copy of *Condition of America’s Public School Facilities: 1999*, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000032.pdf>.

**Fixing Our Schools Now! Qualified Zone Academy Bonds: A New Approach to Financing School Renovation and Repair** contains technical information, frequently asked questions, state contacts and examples of how school districts are using Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs) to finance renovation and repair of school facilities. A copy of this publication can be downloaded from [www.ed.gov/inits/construction/qzab.html](http://www.ed.gov/inits/construction/qzab.html) and is also available free of charge from the Department of Education’s publications center at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

## 2000–01 Satellite Town Meeting Season Set to Begin

On September 19, the Satellite Town Meeting—the Department of Education’s monthly television program about what works in communities in teaching and learning—will begin a new season. This “Back to School” program will feature creative school-community partnerships.

Topics for the remainder of the 2000–01 season will be announced later, although broadcast dates have been set for each program of the new school year (see schedule below).

Each month on the Satellite Town Meeting, national experts, local educators and community leaders share their ideas about how schools can prepare all students for the challenges of the 21st century.

Topics under consideration for the coming year include some of the most important issues facing today’s schools and communities: improving reading skills, expanding technology, boosting student achievement, assuring safety, and serving children with disabilities.

The program is broadcast live on the third Tuesday of each month during the school year, from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Dates for this year’s Satellite Town Meeting are as follows:

September 19, 2000  
October 17, 2000  
November 21, 2000  
January 16, 2001  
February 20, 2001  
March 20, 2001  
April 17, 2001  
May 15, 2001  
June 19, 2001

For more information, visit the Satellite Town Meeting Web page at [www.ed.gov/inits/stm/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/inits/stm/index.html) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

# America Goes Back to School—

*Engaging Family and Community Support for the New School Year*

As students return to school, beginning in August and continuing through October, the America Goes Back to School initiative encourages families and communities to get involved in education. Since 1995, this annual effort has given communities an opportunity to build awareness and support for the work schools do, at a time of year when interest in education is already high.

Each year, thousands of communities organize back-to-school efforts that range from class picnics and parades to partnership building between school districts and businesses. Governors and mayors issue America Goes Back to School proclamations and resolutions. Department of Education, state and local officials travel to schools around the country to discuss ways that family and

characters, along with a host of local elementary school students and special guests, joined Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley for the celebration at the Department of Education in Washington, D.C.

*For more information on this initiative, call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit [www.ed.gov/Family/agbts/](http://www.ed.gov/Family/agbts/).*

## Back-to-School Efforts

*Below are a few examples of what schools, businesses and communities did last year to increase support for the new school year:*

To give parents an opportunity to accompany their children on the first day of school, the Cartersville/Bartow County Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with local schools, convinced businesses in these **Georgia** city and county systems to allow employees time off, either with pay or without penalty. Twenty-three businesses participated. One elementary school reported that normally it would have had 100 parents at the opening of school events, but 300 parents turned out as a result of the “First Day of School” project.

Brethren Reaching Out (BRO), a Christian-based organization, hosted its second annual back-to-school event and family picnic as part of an effort to recruit more male mentors for boys living in a **Florida** public housing complex. BRO, which supports more than 300 youth in the Sanford city apartment building, offers education and crime prevention programs, with support from the University of Central Florida, local churches and law enforcement agencies.

Kindergarteners through fifth-graders in Boonville, **Missouri**, received free school supplies at the first annual Back to School Fair, sponsored by area businesses and community organizations. Students

were given scissors, glue, crayons and paper while their parents explored tables offering information on after-school programs inside the David Barton Elementary School cafeteria. Parents also returned for a Back to School night.

In addition to hosting a family-school picnic, the Lewiston Independent School District #1 in **Idaho** ran two locally produced television commercials on the local station KLEW. Funded by the Idaho Department of Education, one commercial featured a Lewiston teacher encouraging parents to get involved in school events. In the other commercial, a junior high principal tells students that schools provide the buildings, books, buses and lunches, but encourages them to provide the “energy, enthusiasm and effort to do your best.”



*Partners in the Florida group, Brethren Reaching Out, gear up for another school year*

community involvement can help schools meet the challenges they are facing (see page 6 for details on the America Goes Back to School 2000 bus tour).

The role families and communities play in setting high expectations for students is the initiative's current theme: Challenge Our Students and They Will Soar.

This year's America Goes Back to School effort kicked off on May 25 as Arthur and other popular children's book



## Back-to-School Issues

*Following are six key issues that an America Goes Back to School effort can rally around, with a suggestion for each:*

### Recruiting and Preparing Quality Teachers

Over the next decade, America's schools will need to hire 2.2 million teachers, over half of whom will be first-time teachers. Start a mentoring program in which more experienced educators help beginning teachers, or initiate a teacher recognition program to publicize good teaching.

### Expanding After-school Programs

Demand for after-school programs outstrips supply at a rate of about two to one. Support the Lights On! after-school awareness event on October 12, when after-school programs nationwide will simultaneously host an "open house" for parents, community leaders, elected officials and the media.

### Increasing Pathways to College and Careers

Over the next decade, 80 percent of the fastest growing jobs will require a college education or long-term training. Start a "Think College Early" program for middle school students



*Clifford the Big Red Dog amuses children at the May 25 kickoff*

and their families and provide information on course requirements, necessary admission tests, and financial planning and assistance.

### Getting High Standards into Every Classroom

According to a national study, 83 percent of high school students who took algebra and geometry went on to college within two years of graduation, compared to 36 percent of those who did not take these courses. Organize a family math night with other parents, or a math club that meets regularly. Volunteer to tutor children in a child care center or after-school program.

### Making Schools Safe and Drug Free

Although students aged 12 through 18 are more likely to become victims of violent crime away from school, some schools recently have experienced tragic and violent events. Organize a coalition to identify long-term prevention objectives for improving student safety; begin conflict resolution programs; and include law enforcement professionals, mental health providers, and youth-serving organizations within schools and the community.

### Modernizing and Building Schools

Three-fourths of schools report needing a total of \$127 billion for repairs and renovations. Form a group to assess the condition of school buildings and formulate a plan to make schools the center of learning for the whole community, in which space can be used for after-school programs, adult education and literacy classes, and community service projects.

## Organizing an Event

*An America Goes Back to School event sets the stage for family-school-community partnerships to improve education year-round. Here are some basics to consider when organizing an event:*

### Organization

- Start planning early.
- Identify goals, community needs, volunteers/collaborators, events and activities.
- Develop a planning calendar that details each task, person responsible and due date.
- Develop a means to measure success.

### Event/Activity Ideas

- Plan a storytelling night for families; have students perform their favorite stories or poems.
- Join local businesses in sponsoring career and college days.
- Organize a parent resource room in schools or community centers.
- Create a Dads Club to boost fathers' presence in schools.
- Offer after-school programs to give new opportunities to children.

### Publicity

- Develop a plan to reach the media, including what should be accomplished, how and when.
- Develop a contact list of names and numbers, as well as various types of media to explore—magazines, radio, television, trade press, college/community newspapers and the like.
- Develop informational materials to publicize the event and to send to the media—flyers, press releases, pitch letters, and PSAs.

### Follow-up

- Send thank-you notes to volunteers and participants.
- Complete the evaluation process.
- Maintain contact with community partners.
- Implement the plan.

*To order a free copy of the America Goes Back to School Kit, call 1-877-4ED-PUBS or visit [www.ed.gov/Family/agbts/](http://www.ed.gov/Family/agbts/).*



# America Goes Back to School 2000 Bus Tour

Join U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley on a tour along the Mississippi River aboard the "Success Express" as he visits rural schools and communities in an effort to promote educational opportunities and community involvement in the Delta region.

From August 27 to 31, the "Success Express" will stop in the following towns:

## Sunday, August 27

Monroe, Louisiana  
Rayville, Louisiana

## Monday, August 28

Winnsboro, Louisiana  
Portland, Arkansas  
Greenville, Mississippi

## Tuesday, August 29

Hollandale, Mississippi  
Rosedale, Mississippi  
Clarksdale, Mississippi  
Helena, Arkansas

## Wednesday, August 30

Marianna, Arkansas  
Memphis, Tennessee  
Blytheville, Arkansas

## Thursday, August 31

Union City, Tennessee  
Hickman, Kentucky  
Charleston, Missouri  
Ft. Defiance, Illinois  
Metropolis, Illinois  
Paducah, Kentucky

For more information, call  
1-800-USA-LEARN.



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# PARTNERSHIP

## *for Family Involvement in Education*

*A coalition of more than 6,000 business, community, religious and education organizations nationwide. To join the Partnership, call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit <http://pfie.ed.gov>.*

## Partnership to Convene at IAS Conferences

Join the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education this fall at the Seventh Annual Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools (IAS), a three-day series focusing on education reform. The Partnership will meet on the third day of each conference at three sites: Sacramento, California, September 18-20; Louisville, Kentucky, October 2-4; and Washington, D.C., December 13-15.

"Partnerships are the spark that makes things happen in education," said U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W.

Riley, citing the progress made by more than 6,000 Partnership partners.

The fall meetings will feature a plenary speaker and four hands-on sessions on: preparing teachers and other professionals to involve parents; involving business and community organizations in early childhood; developing after-school programs; and building partnerships with faith communities.

At the Networking and Materials Fair, participants will receive and exchange resources on: early childhood development; expanding arts education; and technology and the Web.

The IAS conferences provide information on the Department of Education's initiatives, current research and funding opportunities. The Partnership meetings will offer national, regional and local strategies that promote family involvement and academic achievement.

For more information, visit [www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences](http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences) or e-mail [ias-conference@ed.gov](mailto:ias-conference@ed.gov). To view the Partnership's conference agenda, visit <http://pfie.ed.gov>.

## A Call for Fathers' Involvement

President Clinton released this summer a new report from the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services that offers educators, Head Start programs and other early childhood providers resources with which to encourage fathers' involvement in education.

*A Call to Commitment: Fathers' Involvement in Children's Learning* is part of a series of efforts by Secretaries Richard Riley and Donna Shalala to help communities increase the participation of fathers in their children's learning, and in their readiness to learn at home, at school and in the community. Research reveals that when fathers take

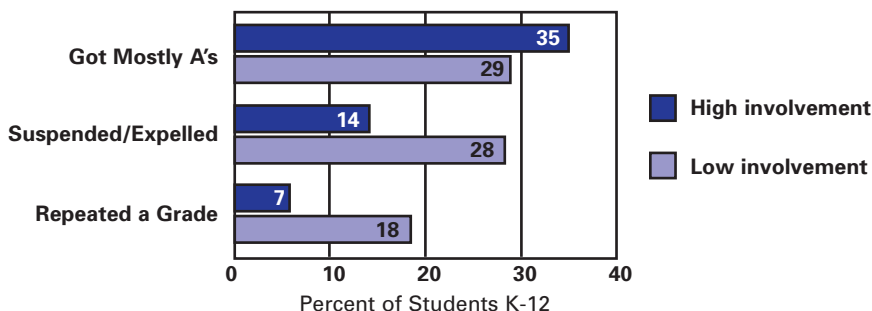
an active role in their children's learning, children learn more, perform better at school and exhibit healthier behavior.

The president noted in his Father's Day radio address that "over the years

parent involvement often has meant mothers' involvement. This assumption misses the importance of fathers."

For a copy of this report, call 1-877-4ED-PUBS or visit <http://pfie.ed.gov>.

### Importance of Fathers' Involvement to Student Success in School



Source: *A Call to Commitment: Fathers' Involvement in Children's Learning*

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AMERICA GOES

# BACK TO SCHOOL

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## Resources for Back-to-School Events

*Publications Provide Tips for Building Partnerships*



The following list of resources is designed to help families, community members and businesses get involved in education.

Published by the U.S. Department of Education and partnering

organizations, these publications are free of charge and available for distribution at an America Goes Back to School event. For a copy, call 1-877-4ED-PUBS with the order number below, or visit [www.ed.gov/Family/agbts/pubs.html](http://www.ed.gov/Family/agbts/pubs.html).

**America Goes Back to School: Information for Families and**

**Community Members\*** offers tips on helping children read independently by the end of third grade, meet high math and science standards, and start early to prepare for college and careers. EE 0288B

**Questions Parents Ask About Schools\*** provides answers about starting school, homework, career preparation, safety and family expectations. EE 0314B

**Strengthening Your Child's Academic Future\*** provides sample questions for parents to ask in finding out about academic expectations in their children's schools. EK 0004P

**Challenge Young Minds: 50 Ways to Better Education\*** provides everyday ideas on improving education. EK 0117P

**Figure This! Math Challenges for Families: Adding Fun and Family to the Middle-School Math Equation** contains tips on activities that engage parents

and caregivers to help children learn math. EK 0258P

**Learning Partners: A Guide to Educational Activities for Families\***, designed primarily for families with pre-school- and elementary school-age children, covers reading, math, science, geography and many more topics. EK 0260P

**The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education: Who We Are and What We Do** describes the activities of Partnership members in making education a priority. EK 0259P

**America Goes Back to School Bookmark.** EK 0135M

*\*Also available in Spanish.*

